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CHARLESTOWN: TOWN HILL DISTRICT

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II

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Massachusetts	
COUNTY: Suffolk	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME
COMMON: Town Hill District
AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION 8th. Congressional District			
STREET AND NUMBER:			
CITY OR TOWN: Charlestown			
STATE Massachusetts	CODE 025	COUNTY: Suffolk	CODE 025

3. CLASSIFICATION			
CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
☒ District ☐ Building ☐ Site ☐ Structure ☐ Object	☐ Public ☐ Private ☒ Both	Public Acquisition: ☐ In Process ☐ Being Considered	☒ Occupied ☒ Unoccupied ☒ Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
☐ Agricultural ☒ Commercial ☒ Educational ☒ Entertainment	☐ Government ☐ Industrial ☐ Military ☐ Museum	☒ Park ☒ Private Residence ☒ Religious ☐ Scientific	☐ Transportation ☐ Other (Specify) _____ _____
Comments _____ _____			

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY		
OWNER'S NAME: Public and Private		
STREET AND NUMBER:		
CITY OR TOWN: Charlestown	STATE: Massachusetts	CODE 025

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION		
COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: Registry of Deeds		
STREET AND NUMBER: Suffolk County Courthouse		
CITY OR TOWN: Boston	STATE: Massachusetts	CODE 025

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS		
TITLE OF SURVEY: 1) Historic American Buildings Survey Mass.-347		
DATE OF SURVEY: 1936 ☒ Federal ☐ State ☐ County ☐ Local		
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Library of Congress		
STREET AND NUMBER:		
CITY OR TOWN: Washington	STATE: D.C.	CODE

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	☒ Excellent	☒ Good	☒ Fair	☒ Deteriorated	☐ Ruins	☐ Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	☒ Altered	☒ Unaltered	☐ Moved	☒ Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Town Hill and the immediately adjacent area to the north in Charlestown include a variety of residential and commercial structures, constructed from brick, wood, and stone or mixtures of these materials. A significant number of these residential structures (11) date from as early as the late Georgian (1780-1795) and the Federalist periods (1795-1830) of architecture. Many other buildings in this area were built within the next 50 years. Together, the earlier structures represent the best-preserved cluster of Pre-Federalist and Federalist structures in the entire city of Boston.

The Town Hill area of Charlestown includes all buildings within the boundary formed by Rutherford Avenue from Washington Street to City Square; Main Street, from City Square to Winthrop Street, then Warren Street through the back lot lines of 77, 79, 81½, 81B and 83 Warren Street, crossing Warren Street at Pleasant Street to Thompson Street, along back lot lines of 127 Main Street to Main Street, south on Main Street, west on Central Place through rear lot lines of Saint John's Church and Rectory to Rutherford Avenue, along Rutherford Avenue back to Washington Street.

The late Georgian and Federalist structures within these boundaries are primarily free-standing buildings, found in groupings, although several are standing surrounded by later constructed buildings. The Edward Everett House (1) was built before 1814 at 16 Harvard Street and is a striking example of a free-standing Federal brick building. The house is three stories, laid in flemish bond with flared brownstone lintels over 6/6 window sashes. It is five bays wide by two bays deep. An ornate wooden Federal entrance with an elliptical fanlight is obscured by the later addition of a wooden porch, supported on Ionic columns.

A nearby, but not adjacent, Pre-Federalist frame house is situated at 4 Washington Terrace(2). The original carved pedimented door frame is the one unaltered exterior element on the building, which suffered extreme changes in shape and height during the nineteenth century.

At 92 Main Street(3) stands a free-standing, splitstone Federal building built after 1795. Five bays wide and two bays deep, this structure located at the juncture of the Town Hill streets with Main Street and is L-shaped to accommodate an irregular lot. The three story structure is accentuated by plain stone sills, lintels and quoins. The ground floor has been altered for commercial purposes.

At 105 Main Street is the Warren Tavern(4); only the square shape, the hipped roof and the upper story fenestration pattern is original; rehabilitation for a revival of the early tavern use has produced imitative colonializing ornament and siding.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

3. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

☐ Pre-Columbian☐ 16th Century☒ 18th Century☐ 20th Century☐ 15th Century☒ 17th Century☒ 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

☐ Aboriginal☐ Education☐ Political☒ Urban Planning☐ Prehistoric☐ Engineering☐ Religion/Phi-☐ Other (Specify)☐ Historic☐ Industry☐ Philosophy☐ Agriculture☐ Invention☐ Science☒ Architecture☐ Landscape☐ Sculpture☐ Art☐ Architecture☐ Social/Human-☐ Commerce☐ Literature☐ itorian☐ Communications☐ Military☐ Theater☐ Conservation☐ Music☐ Transportation

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Town Hill and its adjacent streets are characterized by a dense fabric of late eighteenth and nineteenth century buildings, freestanding, in rows, or in clusters, all of a small scale and proportion, and lining the streets which correspond to the sloping contours. The layout of Charlestown in the vicinity of the Town Hill was determined by Thomas Graves, an engineer, who was commissioned by the Massachusetts Company in 1641 to plan streets for the small colony. It is significant that Charlestown even in the early seventeenth century was developing a conscious plan for its physical structure. Although the residential settlement spread over the streets of the Town Hill and along Main Street, (the major route across Charlestown Neck to Cambridge and the hinterlands), the main focus of the colony was at City Square--the seat of government and the market place and only a short distance from the active waterfront. Above, on the crest of the Town Hill was a small fort that by 1716 was so deteriorated, that the First Congregational Church used the cleared site for its new meetinghouse. Now the hilltop and a section curving down the slope forms the John Harvard Mall--commemorating Charlestown's most illustrious citizen.

During the eighteenth century, Charlestown was an increasingly busy seaport. It has been estimated that in 1775 approximately five hundred dwellings and public buildings existed, most of them located on and around the Town Hill, along Main and Warren Streets, and scattered at the western neck. In 1775, after the renowned Battle of Bunker Hill (actually on Breed's Hill), which established open warfare and the potential threat of the colonial forces, the British set fire to the town, destroying almost the entire settlement.

The vigorous rebuilding that began almost immediately after the end of the Revolutionary War, respected the essential street pattern of the original town. At this time the Town Hill was lowered slightly but without alteration to its street pattern. Some of the early post-war Georgian style buildings still survive and together with the several Federal and later Greek Revival style dwellings create a significant concentration of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century architecture.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Bartlett, Josiah, Historical Sketch of Charlestown - Nov. 16, 1813, Boston:
 Printed by John Eliot, 1814.
 Frothingham, Richard, History of Charlestown - Boston: Little, Brown, 1845.
 Hunnewell, J.F., A Century of Town Life (1775-1887) - Boston: Little,
 Brown, 1888.
Memorial History of Boston, ed. J. Windsor - Boston: James R. Osgood
 & Co., 1881.
 Sawyer, T.T., Old Charlestown - Boston: James H. West Co., 1902.
Bunker Hill Aurora, inclusive.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	42 ° 22 ' 28.73	71 ° 03 ' 54.13		° ' "	° ' "	
NE	42 ° 22 ' 28.73	71 ° 03 ' 44.20				
SE	42 ° 22 ' 18.13	71 ° 03 ' 44.20				
SW	42 ° 22 ' 18.13	71 ° 03 ' 54.13				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 11

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Carol Bratley		
ORGANIZATION Charlestown Preservation Society	DATE February 1973	
STREET AND NUMBER: 81 1/2 Warren Avenue		
CITY OR TOWN: Charlestown	STATE Massachusetts	CODE 025

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☐ State ☐ Local ☐

Name _____

Title _____

Date _____

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST: _____

 Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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7. (con't)

Beside the Warren Tavern, at 119 Main Street is the Benjamin Thompson House(5), built about 1794-1796, and a fine example of a Federal style woodframe building. The building is situated end to street and with a two story ell toward the rear. The front facade is five bays wide and three stories high, and is accentuated by prominent quoins at each corner, an ornate reconstructed doorframe and a wooden cornice with carved lintils. The rear facade has irregularly placed windows, with a prominent large round-headed window at the first landing of the central interior staircase.

At the juncture of Warren and Thompson Streets (9 Thompson Street) is the woodframe clapboard Timothy Thompson House(6), a one-room deep Federal house. Because an adjacent partner has been demolished, this building form is quite striking. The facade facing Thompson Street displays the rather typical Federal organization of three stories and five bays. Set end to street, the side is only two bays wide, and a brick party wall is left exposed with chimneys jutting from the half-hipped roof. Attached to the side is a two-story ell. Original clapboarding has been replaced with new clapboarding, and the original doorframe has been repaired and retained.

The cluster of two Federal and one late Georgian building dominates the corner of Warren and Pleasant Streets. 83 Warren Street(7) is a large three story woodframe Federal structure with a rear ell. The facade has standard Federal organization, but ground floor entrances have been replaced with imitative frames.

Directly adjacent and seemingly attached to 83 Warren Street, is 81 Warren Street(8), the large three story woodframe Federal house, set end to street with a brick party wall. This striking building retains much of its original detailing: corner posts, 6/6 window sash, and a particularly fine wood doorframe, constructed with pilasters supporting an entablature with modillion blocks; side lights flank the panelled door. The two story side ell is now in poor condition.

Set behind the Federal houses and end to Pleasant Street 81B Warren Street(9) is a diminutive free-standing late Georgian, woodframe house. Two and a half stories and covered by a gambrel roof, the house is only three bays wide and one bay deep. Originally clapboard, most of the house is now shingled.

At the base of the Town Hill at 55-61 Main Street stands the John Larkin House(10), a three story square house with a deck-on hip roof. Although the openings are boarded shut, and the clapboard structure is covered with asbestos siding, much of the original character is still obvious. Intact are the heavy carved wood quoins, the modillion block cornice, and the capped and pegged window frames. The street floor has been completely altered for commercial use.

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Next door at 65-71 Main Street is the John Hurd House(11), a similar square-shaped, woodframe late Georgian residence. This handsome structure has deck-on-hip roof, and its Main Street facade is accentuated by prominent quoins. The mansion exterior is clapboarded. The first floor was converted to commercial space, and a small one story structure is appended to the north side.

Side by side on Devens Street is Saint John's Church and Rectory building(12). The church structure, built in 1841, is a fine example of early Gothic Revival: a heavy granite facade is punctuated by square crenelated entrance tower. Standard medieval characteristics include the pointed arch windows and the tower's small quatrefoil windows. Beside it, dating almost thirty years later, is the two story wooden chapel, set on a brick base, and a three-sided apse.

Intermeshed among these distinguished buildings are a variety of structures styled in different architectural fashions of the nineteenth century but together reinforce the street patterns that conform to the hilly topography. Generally, the sloping streets of the Town Hill (Harvard, Harvard Place, and Washington) are lined with three to four story brick row houses, often with bowfronts, and nearly always with raised, recessed entryways. A notable row of flat fronted Greek Revival houses, 7-23 Harvard Street, with sparse ornamentation contrasts with the larger townhouses, 22-24, 28 Harvard Street, which bear characteristics of a later Italianate style: brownstone arched entrance frames, elaborated lintel shapes, oriel windows, heavy modillion or bracketed cornices, and mansard roofs. A cluster of tiny houses on Harvard Square (#25-29) exemplifies the scale of early nineteenth century modest residences. 27 Harvard Street is particularly unusual with its splitstone facade.

Prescott Street provides a more heterogeneous view of the massive form of the old Harvard school with its medieval inspired ornament, its diminutive gambrel roofed neighbor, 23 Prescott Street (now sheeted in modern siding and roofing), and at the bottom of the hill, a small modest Federal brick house.

Main Street on the Town Hill side is lined in an almost continuous row of brick buildings built throughout the nineteenth century. 18-34 Main Street combines, as originally, commercial space framed in granite with residential space in the upper floors. Taller wooden and brick commercial buildings of a late nineteenth century date stand across Main Street and on the perpendicular streets leading to Warren Street. Numbers 7, 9, 11 Monument Avenue illustrate a rather picturesque treatment of a standard three flat apartment structure: the building mass is enclosed by a jagged facade and irregular roofline with a combination of wood clapboards and patterned shingles that create a rich surface texture.

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7. (con't)

Several double houses which line Warren Street illustrate the vernacular versions of Greek Revival motifs. Cornices with complete returns on the gable ends of pitched roofs form broad pediments, and plain entrance frames suggest classical orders.

8. (con't)

The Edward Everett House(1), the most distinguished brick Federal house in Charlestown, was built by Matthew Bridge, a shipping merchant and state legislator. Bridge built the house for his daughter shortly before he died in 1814. In 1830, Everett purchased the house and lived there during his term as U.S. Representative, moving only after he was elected Governor of Massachusetts in 1836. Before his political career, Everett was a Harvard professor and editor of the North American Review; later accomplishments in his life included being President of Harvard College, Secretary of State after Daniel Webster died, and a U.S. Senator. The next resident was William Carleton, a long-term occupant (1836-63), who founded Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota.

The stately houses up the slope of Harvard Street were developed in the 1850's and 1860's on land owned by Moses Dow who built himself a town-house at 28 Harvard Street. Dow, founder of the Dow Academy in New Hampshire, published the Waverly Magazine during the Civil War.

The house at 92 Main Street(3) is a unique freestanding structure of splitstone, reputedly built by Nathaniel Austin who had the stone transported from Outer Brewster Island in Boston Harbor. First mention of the house was in 1822. Later in the decade, an early Charlestown publication, the Bunker Hill Aurora, indicates its offices were at the site. The only other splitstone building in Charlestown is in the tiny Federal cluster on Harvard Square: 27 Harvard Square, also faced with the Outer Brewster stone, is thought to have been the Charlestown Free Dispensary, established in 1814.

The late eighteenth century reconstructed buildings on the popularly called Thompson Triangle include three buildings. The Warren Tavern(4) 105 Main Street, c. 1780, honors in name General Joseph Warren, killed after leading patriot troops in the Bunker Hill battle. For many years the Tavern was the location of the first Masonic lodge in Charlestown; Paul Revere spoke at its consecration in 1784. The elegant frame mansion, 119 Main Street(5), c. 1794-96, was built by Timothy Thompson, Sr. and was the birthplace of one of his sons, Benjamin, who later was to become State Senator and U.S. Congressman. The elder Thompson had also occupied 9 Thompson Street (on the corner of Warren)(6).

The Thompson Triangle dwellings and the cluster of wooden houses on Warren Street(7, 8, 9) illustrate the siting, scale, and characteristics of the architecture from a growing early nineteenth century town. No other such grouping exists in Boston.

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(Continuation Sheet)

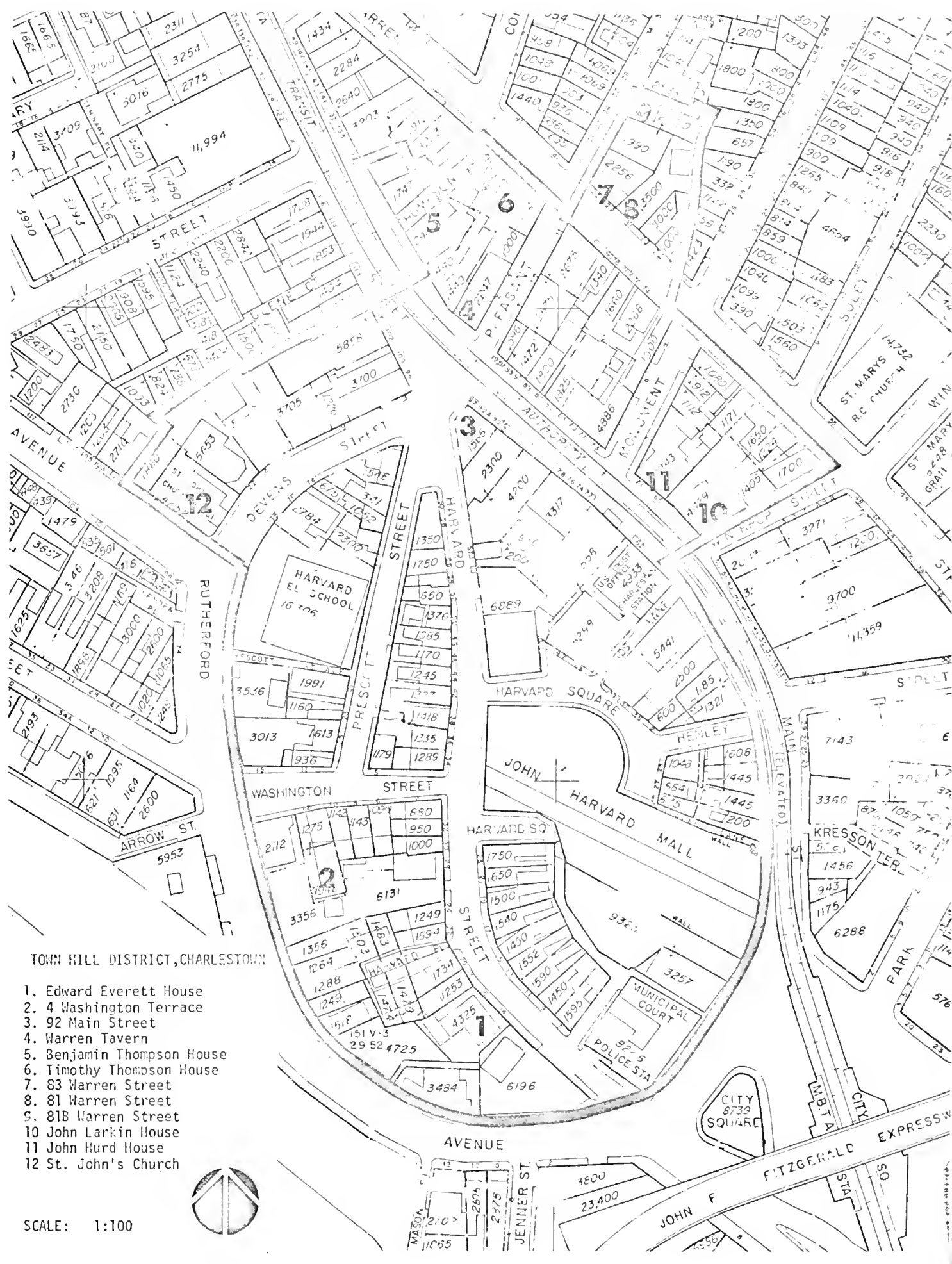
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8. (con't)

Also highly unusual within the City are the outstanding wooden mansions on Main Street, the John Larkin House(10), 55-61 Main Street, and the John Hurd House(11), 65-71 Main Street. Although deteriorated and with altered ground floors, the pair is a significant example of late Georgian architecture with extensive original detailing, especially on the Larkin House which also retains much interior woodwork.

Around the base of the Town Hill stands St. John's Church(12) on the corner of Devens Street and old Rutherford Avenue. Built in 1841 by Richard Bond, the small church reuses the standard meetinghouse shape of a rectangular nave fronted by an ornamented facade with a central entrance vestibule and tower. The openings and ornamentation reveal the medievalizing motifs which later were developed into full-blown Gothic Revival statements. St. John's Church is remarkably similar to the Bowdoin Street Church in Boston built in 1831 on a design attributed to Solomon Willard.



TOWN HILL DISTRICT, CHARLESTOWN

1. Edward Everett House
2. 4 Washington Terrace
3. 92 Main Street
4. Warren Tavern
5. Benjamin Thompson House
6. Timothy Thompson House
7. 83 Warren Street
8. 81 Warren Street
9. 81B Warren Street
10. John Larkin House
11. John Hurd House
12. St. John's Church

SCALE: 1:100



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

PROPERTY MAP FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with map)

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1. NAME Town Hill District, Charlestown			
COMMON:			
AND OR HISTORIC:			
2. LOCATION Boston			
STREET AND NUMBER:			
CITY OR TOWN: Boston			
STATE: Massachusetts	CODE 025	COUNTY: Suffolk	CODE 025
3. MAP REFERENCE			
SOURCE: Topographic & Planimetric Survey of the City of Boston			
SCALE: 1:100			
DATE: 1962			
4. REQUIREMENTS			
TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS			
1. Property boundaries where required.			
2. North arrow.			
3. Lotitude and longitude reference.			

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STREET AND NUMBER:			
CITY OR TOWN: Boston			
STATE: Massachusetts	CODE 025	COUNTY: Suffolk	CODE 025
3. MAP REFERENCE			
SOURCE: USGS 7.5' Series Boston South Quadrangle			
SCALE: 1:24,000			
DATE: 1956			
4. REQUIREMENTS			
TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS			
1. Property boundaries where required.			
2. North arrow.			
3. Latitude and longitude reference.			

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